

The Use and Abuse of Christian Liberty.

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A SERMON

Preach'd at the Assizes held at *Chelmsford*, for the County of *Essex*.

ON

Thursday, *August* the First, 1717.

Before the

Right Honourable the Lord Chief Justice *King*.

AND THE

Honourable Mr Justice *Powis*.

By BENJAMIN CARTER, M. A.

Published at the Desire of the High Sheriff, and the Gentlemen of the Grand Inquest.

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TO
DAVID GANSIL, Esq;
High Sheriff of the County of *Essex*,

A N D

To the Gentlemen of the *Grand Inquest*,

VIZ.

Sir <i>Nich. Garrard</i> , Bar.	<i>Matthew Howland, Esq;</i>
Sir <i>H. Fetherstone</i> , Bar.	<i>David Petty, Esq;</i>
<i>Jeremy Shaw, Esq;</i>	<i>John Wilkes, Esq;</i>
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<i>Robert Johnson, Esq;</i>	<i>Anthony Luther, Esq;</i>
<i>Anthony Collins, Esq;</i>	

This Discourse is humbly Dedicated,

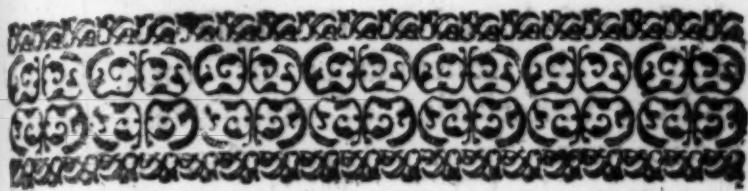
BY

Their most Obedient Servant,

BENJ. CARTER.

PLEASING AND DIVINE

AND THE SOUL IS BLESSED



The Use and Abuse of Christian Liberty.

GALAT. V. 13.

Brethren, ye have been called unto Liberty; only use not Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh, but by Love serve one another.



LIBERTY is a Word of a pleasing and agreeable Sound, but too often mistaken in its Meaning, and misapplied in its Use. Rightly understood it deserves to be numbered among the choicest Blessings of Heaven, and the most valuable Enjoyments of Life. It is the immediate Gift of GOD, and the peculiar Privilege of a Reasonable Creature.

Inanimate Creatures are determined by the *Necessity* of their own Natures; Creatures endued

endued with Life and Sense are led by *Instinct* to seek and to do those Things that tend to the Continuance of their Species, and the Preservation of themselves; to *Man* alone, who is a rational Agent, Liberty does properly belong: For he alone acts upon Choice and Principle, can discern between Good and Evil, and separate Truth from Falshood; can compare and review, deliberate and judge, examine into Circumstances, and, in a good Measure, foresee the Issues and Consequences of his Actions. To a Being thus qualified and endowed, Liberty is an *Excellent Possession, and a Mighty Treasure*, studiously to be maintain'd, and carefully to be used within the Bounds of *Duty and Charity*. I say, within the Bounds of *Duty and Charity*, for it is a very great Mistake to think that any Liberty may be extended beyond these; neither the Word of *GOD*, nor the Principles of human Reason, will justify such a Notion. The Liberty which recommends itself to us, as Men and Christians, implies, not a Freedom from all Bonds or Restraints whatsoever, but a Freedom from *servile Bonds, and harsh Restraints*; such as are unworthy our Natures, and—*inconsistent* with the Dignity of them; such as deprive us of any part of that Peace and Security which it is allowable for us to desire and endeavour after in this present State, and hinder us in the Pursuit of that *unspeakable Happiness and Glory* we hope to enjoy in a future State.

State. From such Bonds and Restraints it is an Happiness to be free ; but still, the *Liberty to which we are called*, neither destroys nor lessens any Obligation of Duty to our GOD, or Charity to our Brethren ; and is so far from countenancing or encouraging us in the Violation of either of these, that it is itself an Argument and a Motive for the greater Zeal and Solitude in the Discharge of them *both*. This, I hope, will appear to be the Force and Meaning of the Words I have chosen for the Subject of the present Discourse. —— *Brethren, ye have been called unto Liberty, only use not Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh, but by Love serve one another.* From which Passage I shall endeavour to shew,

First, *The Nature and Kinds of that Liberty to which we are called.*

Secondly, *When, and by what Means, it is grossly abused, and made an Occasion to the Flesh.*

Thirdly, *That if we will use it with Advantage to others and ourselves, we must follow St. Paul's Directions, and by Love serve one another.*

First, I am to shew, the Nature and Kinds of that *Liberty we are called to*. The Liberty we can be by any Means entitled to, must

must concern us as Men under the Guidance of rational Faculties, or as Christians who own a revealed and instituted Religion, or as Members of a Civil Community. There is a Liberty which belongs to us as Men, derived from, and claimed under, the Supreme and All-wise Being, the Source and Fountain of all Created Beings, the Author and Giver of every good Gift, who, in this Respect, hath made us to differ from the rest of the Creation. He hath animated our Bodies with immaterial Souls, and given us a kind of Command over our selves. Before we enter upon any Action, we can consider and deliberate, examine its Nature, Circumstances and End, and proceed, or forbear, according to the Result of such Examination. With Respect to our Minds, we can ordinarily chuse what Subject we will employ them upon; we can direct our Thoughts to this or that particular Branch of Knowledge which please us best, and dwell most upon those Ideas which we are most delighted withal. With respect to our Bodies, Rest or Motion, this or that particular Kind of Action, the doing or the not doing of it, depends on the Direction and Determination of the Mind. say, *ordinarily* it is thus with us, not always; for the Body may be confined by Force, or disabled by Sickness and Pain; and so far this Liberty, which consists in a Power to act, or not to act, according as the Mind de-
re^{re}

recks[†], teases. But though this be a valuable Liberty, which well deserves to be discuss'd, yet, being foreign to that which St. Paul speaks of, must not be enlarged upon at this Time. For St. Paul speaks not of the Liberty in which we were created, but of that which we may claim and enjoy, by Vertue of our *Redemption through the Blood of JESUS CHRIST*, who hath released us from the Servitude of Sin, and the *Bondage of Corruption*, and asserted us into the *Glorious Liberty of the Sons of GOD*. Of this Liberty many Great and Excellent Things are spoken in the Sacred Oracles. Indeed if we view it precisely, as it respects the *Jews*, it signifies only a Freedom from the Law of *Moses*; but if we take in the whole Compass of Christian Liberty, it consists of these Parts and Branches.

1. A Deliverance from our Spiritual Enemies, Sin, Satan and Death.
2. A Discharge from the Ritual or Ceremonial Law, which as Christians we are under no Obligation to observe. Consequent whereunto is,
3. A Freedom in all Things of a *middle and indifferent Nature*, in Meats and Drinks, and generally in whatever other Things, that are neither commanded nor forbidden, by the Law of *God*; provided always, that this Freedom be used without Contempt or Disobedience to our *Lawful Superiors*, and with-

[†] Mr. Lock's *Essay of Human Understanding*, B. 2, Ch. 21.

out Scandal or Offence to our weak Brethren. To which I may add,

4. As another Branch of our Christian Liberty, That the Great Charter of our Peace and Salvation, is put into all our Hands, and open to our View. I mean the written Word of GOD, *The sole unerring Rule of Faith and Manners*; nor may we receive any Doctrine contrary thereunto, nor join in any Practice forbidden thereby. See we here the Extent, see we also the inestimable Worth of Christian Liberty! GOD, who is rich in Mercy, for the Love wherewith he hath loved us, has rescued us from the Tyranny of our Lusts, and the Dominion of Satan; has delivered us from the sting of Death which is Sin, and from the strength of Sin which is the Law. He that condescended to become Man for our Sakes, was content also to be made a Curse for us, that we through him might obtain and inherit all Kinds of Blessings. Nor have we received the Spirit of Bondage to fear, but we have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. And as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*. Behold now what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the Sons of God†. The Advantages, as well as the Honour, of this Relation are illustriously Great. For tho' it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet, we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall

* Rom. viii. 14, 15.

† 1 John iii. 1.

see him as he is. Ought we not to pay all Duty and Gratitude to our Lord JESUS CHRIST the Purchaser and Donor of this Liberty, who has given us boldness to enter into the Holiest by his Blood, by a new and living Way which he hath consecrated for us through the Vail, that is to say, his Flesh †; who hath fulfilled all Righteousness, and abrogated the Ceremonial Law, which was both weak and defective in it self, and heavy and burthensome in its Observances? It was defective in it self, for it was but a Figure for the Time present, in which were offered both Gifts and Sacrifices which could not make him that did the Service perfect as pertaining to the Conscience; and it was burthensome to be observed, because it stood much in Meats and Drinks and divers Washings and carnal Ordinances ||, which were imposed, not as most excellent in their own Nature, but as most suitable to the Temper of the People upon whom they were laid, not with a Design to continue for ever, but only until the time of Reformation. The Jewish Church was in a State of Pupillage and Minority, according to that of the Apostle, the Law was our Schoolmaster to bring us to Christ †, who in the fulness of Time was sent forth from God, to redeem them which were under the Law*, and to blot out the hand-writing of Ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, which therefore, he took out of the

† Heb. x. 19, 20,
‡ Gal. iv. 4, 5.

|| Heb. ix. 9, 10. † Gal. iii. 24.

way, nailing it to his Cross [†]. That we might all have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and be made partakers of the Promises [†], and disclaiming the Righteousness which is of the Law, trust to that only which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith ^{||}. Being thus made free by the Son of GOD, we ought to stand at an equal Distance from the Rudiments of the World, and the beggarly Elements ^{*||} of the Law, alike careful, that we be not spoiled through vain Philosophy, or carnal Ordinances, such as touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using. Which Things have indeed a shew of Wisdom in Will-worship and Humility, and neglecting of the Body, not in any Honour to the satisfying of the Flesh ^{††}. There may be a Shew of Wisdom, but nothing of true and solid Worth in such Services; nor are we therefore to subject ourselves to them, or to be deluded and entangled with them; but to adhere steadfastly to that new and holy Way of Worship, instituted and established by our Blessed Lord. And that we may know how to value and preserve this our Christian Liberty, GOD has vouchsafed us a standing Revelation of his Will, to guide our Feet in the Way of Truth and Everlasting Peace. Yes, we have a sure Word of Prophecy ^{*} to attend to; a sealed Book, I mean the Canon of Sacred Scriptures, to consult

[†] Col. ii. 14.
^{††} Gal. iv. 9.

[†] Eph. iii. 6.
^{||} Col. iii. 8, 21, 22, 23.

^{||} Philipp. iii. 9.
[†] 2 Pet. i. 19.

and

and advise with; to the Words of which no Man may add, and from which no Man may diminish. I could not help these brief Explanations on the severall Branches of our Christian Liberty, which is a Subject so copious and delightful, that it is easier to multiply Words upon it, than to restrain them. Give me leave now to accommodate this Subject to our selves.

We, my Brethren, are called to a twofold Liberty, Religious and Civil. We profess the Gospel of CHRIST in the Simplicity thereof, and are in the full and peaceable Enjoyment of that Liberty wherewith our Lord *bath made us free*. We, I say, who have the Happiness to be Members of the Church of *England*, have great Reason to praise GOD and congratulate each other on this Behalf. Methinks, it almost wants an Apology, that, after having discoursed on Christian Liberty, I should mention it to a Congregation of *Christians*, as a special *Favour* and Blessing, that they are in the Possession of it. For if it was settled by CHRIST on the *whole Church*, then every Member of that Church has a *Right* to enjoy it. But tho' this be true, yet if we consider the Sins of our selves, or the *Sufferings* of others, and how much Christianity that *now is*, is altered and changed from that which was in the Days of the Apostles, and their immediate Successors, we shall see abundant Cause to acknowledge the *distinguishing Goodness* of Heaven towards us. It has pleased GOD, for the Iniquities of the Christian World, to permit a great

great part of it to fall into Bondage and Servitude: And the Religion of CHRIST has, in this Respect, been even worse used than was the Law of Moses. Burthens have been laid upon Christians, heavy and grievous to be born, which the Imposers *would not touch with one of their Fingers.* The Commandments of Men have been taught for Doctrines, and the express Laws of GOD changed or set aside to make room for mere human Inventions. I need not say that I intend this Charge against the Church of Rome, who by claiming an absolute Dominion over all other Churches, requiring her Constitutions and Decrees to be rever'd and obeyed as Oracles; by adding new Articles of Faith, by introducing a thousand superstitious Practices, and uncommanded Severities, and making them all *essential* to Christianity, and *necessary* to Salvation, has done her utmost to enslave the whole Christian World, has actually reduced her own Members to a State of wretched Subjection, and extinguished the very Notion of Christian Liberty. For what Notion of Liberty can be preserved in a Church where the Scriptures are withheld, and publick Service performed in an unknown Tongue; where a full and unconditional Obedience is required to all Orders and Decisions, as well in Matters of Practice as Faith, where the Members neither think themselves obliged nor warranted to enquire into any Points settled by the Authority of the Church, which they are to regard as

Sacred

Sacred and *Infallible**? and therefore to submit to, and receive all and every thing therein enjoined, upon Pain of incurring the Censure, and feeling the hot Displeasure, of an Inquisition in this World, and of being consigned over, with horrible Solemnity and form, to eternal Damnation in the next. From this *Toke*, which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear, we have been free ever since the happy and glorious Reformation of our Religion. Blind Faith and implicite Obedience are disclaimed in our Church, for tho' we teach, That *much Reverence* is to be given to the *Writings of the Godly Ancient Fathers*, more to the *Canons and Decrees of General and Provincial Councils*, and not a little to the *Judgment of Learned, Sober, and Godly Divines of later and present Times*, both in our own and other Reformed Churches; yet we teach also, That we may not, *jurare in verba*, build our Faith upon them as upon a *sure Foundation*, so as to receive for *undoubted Truth* whatsoever they hold, and to *reject* as a gross Error whatever they disallow, without *farther Examination*†. The Articles of the Church of England are all founded upon the Sacred Scriptures, and proveable by the express Words of

* —— *Clamat isti nihil oportere immutari, his rebus humanis tatis fieri, Romanam Ecclesiam ista decreuisse, eam mare non posse. Sylvester enim Prierias ait. Ecclesiam Romanam esse normam & Regulam veritatis: Sacras Scripturas ab illa, & autoritatem de fidem accipere.* —— *Pigbius etiam non dubitat dicere injussu Romana Ecclesia non clarissima quidem Scriptura credendum esse. Joan. Juel. Apol. pro Ecc. Aug.*

† *Sanders. Serm.*

them,

hem, or by the clearest Deductions from them. She has restored the Key of Knowledge to the Christian Laity, and exhorts them to make a diligent and conscientious Use of it. Her Terms of Communion are easy and gentle, her Worship is founded on the Model of the purest Ages, and preserves a venerable Gravity, and a primitive Simplicity; her Ceremonies are few and significant. She has enjoined nothing as *in it self absolutely necessary to Salvation*, which the Scriptures have not made so, nor forbid any thing as *in it self simply unlawful*, which the Scriptures have not determined so to be; and has left the Judgment and the Practice of all her Members free and at liberty, in all those Things in which the Scriptures have left it, excepting only, that she requires the Observation of a few Rules and Orders, made (by virtue of that Power which all Churches, in all Ages, ever have claimed and exercised, and ever will and must do so) for *Decency and Edification*. Which Power, thus claimed and exercised, in Things of an indifferent Nature, wherein the Scripture is silent, is consistent with Christian Liberty, in its due Latitude and Extent. Add to this Liberty, which we enjoy in Religious Matters, our *Civil Liberty*, which, tho' of a less valuable Nature than the former, is not to be passed over, in Neglect or Forgetfulness. The Welfare of the Soul, and the Joys of Eternity, do indeed challenge our deepest Cares, and warmest Pursuits; yet it is also very natural, and very al-

low-

lowable for us to be concern'd for the Preservation of our Bodies, the Prosperity of our Families, and whatever else tends to our present Peace or Security. This has always been the Sense of Mankind. The *Grecians* instituted Games to *Jupiter* * *Eleutherius*, the Assertor of Liberty, which were celebrated every Fifth Year, by Deputies sent to *Platæa*, from almost all the Cities of *Greece*, and called *Ελευθερία*, *Games of Liberty*, the *Romans* also erected a Temple to *Liberty*, and worshipped her as a Goddess †. And as most of the Wars recorded in History have proceeded from a Thirst of Power and Dominion on the Part of the Aggressors, so have the Defendants been animated with the Love of their native Country, and that noble *Jealousy* for the Freedom and *Liberty* thereof, which seems not peculiar to this or that Nation or People, but common to the whole Race of Mankind. By *Liberty* I hope none will think I mean an *Immunity from Government or Law*; that were a savage *Liberty* indeed, fit only to reign in Forests and Desarts, and among Beasts of Prey. A Man might as well plead for Confusion and Wickedness, or make a Panegyrick upon a Tempest or Hurricane, as recommend *Liberty* under so wild a Notion as that. * That Nation or People may be said to be at *full Liberty*, who govern themselves by *Laws* of their own *Making*,

* D' Poster's *Antiq. of Greece*. Vol. I. p. 2. *Of the Rel. of Greece*. ch. 20. † *Tull. de nat. Deor.* I. 2. *Liv. His.* I. 24.

* *Liberi populi*: i. e. qui neq; *leges accipiebant a Populo Rom.* neq; *populus Rom. jus dicebat*. *Tul. Orat. in L. Pison.*

without paying Subjection to, or admitting the Interposition of, any Foreign Power. And the Members of that Community are also at full *Liberty*, who are ruled by stated and well-known *Laws*, to which they have given their Consent; and according to which Justice and Equity are fairly and impartially distributed. Now whether these general Characters of *Liberty* are to be found in this State and Kingdom, will not, I hope, be made a Question by any, I dare say, not by so worthy an Assembly as this. Our Constitution is a Legal Monarchy, in which the Dignity of the Prince and the Security of the Subject is consulted; our *Laws* are contrived and made, by a select Number of the most honourable and wise Persons, whose Approbation and Concurrence must be had, before they are tender'd to the Royal Assent; they are then solemnly promulgated to the whole Realm, and Obedience required to them. As for the Wisdom and Prudence, the Justice and the Mercy of these *Laws*, how well they guard the Honour, and support the Dignity of the Crown, maintain the Peace, and defend the Properties of the People; how wisely they are designed to restrain all Disorders, and cure all Distempers in the State; to obviate all possible Mischiefs, and prevent or punish every Kind and Degree of Wickedness; how much Encouragement they afford to those who are diligent and industrious, quiet and peaceable in the Land, and how admirably fitted to promote universal Peace and Happiness;

ness; need not be said before such an Audience as this. At least it would ill become *Me* to enlarge upon these Particulars, and to discourse of the Excellence or Usefulness of our Laws, before so many of Rank and Eminence in the Knowledge of them; before them who are not more distinguished by their *High Office* in the Law, than by their profound Capacity, unwearied Diligence, and untainted Integrity in the Discharge of it. It may suffice therefore to observe, that our Government is mild and indulgent, that the old *Roman Privilege* insisted on by *St. Paul*, may also be challenged by every one of us, *viz.* That it is not lawful to punish a Subject of *Great Britain Uncondemned*, nor to condemn him *Untried*. The most flagrant Offender may promise himself a *patient Hearing*, and a *full Proof*, before he fall under Sentence; and in all Civil Causes the Plaintiff and Defendant are both heard at large; and the Verdict is brought in by unbiassed and disinterested Persons; so that nothing is wanting on the Part of the Law, which intends, that Justice and Equity should always take place. He now that is dissatisfied with such a Government as this, would not, perhaps, be *willing*, and in truth is hardly *fit* to live under *any Government at all*. He that thinks a Liberty within the Compass of these Laws too restrain'd, neither understands what *true Liberty* is, nor is worthy to enjoy it; for surely a Liberty without the Bounds of Virtue and Law, is but a Privilege to put the World in

Confusion, and a License for a Man to destroy himself.

Having been thus large on the first Head, I shall say the less to the *Second*, which was to shew, When, and by what Means the *Liberty to which we are called* is grossly abused, and *made an Occasion to the Flesh*. I must treat this Subject in the most general Manner, by laying down what I verily believe to be the Truth, and what I hope will appear so to others, tho' it be not supported at this Time with particular Reasonings and Argumentations. The most notorious Abuses of *Liberty* are comprizable under four Heads, for they respect either the Church, the State, our Christian Brethren, or our selves. With respect to the Church, Christian Liberty is then abused, when it is pleaded as a Discharge from all Duty and Obligation, to comply with the *Use of indifferent Things* in the Worship of GOD, when such Things are enjoin'd and established by the Command of lawful Superiors. That the Church is a *Society of Men united to God and to themselves by a Divine Covenant*, that it has its proper Officers of an higher and lower Degree, and is subject to certain Orders and Regulations, that it results * from the *Nature of all Societies*, that the *Governors of them should have a Power of ordering what seems to them most for the Beauty and Advantage of them*; that they *should be Judges of what conduces to this End, and should have a Title to the Obe-*

* Bp. Hoadley's *Reasonableness of Conformity*, p. 37.

dience of the People under their Care, in whatever does not contradict the Laws of that Society by which they are all to be governed. That this Power is by the general Precepts of the Gospel, actually given to those, with whom the Care of the Church is entrusted, I shall not labour to prove. Now taking it for granted, as I think I well may, that in the Church of *England* her Doctrines are conformable to the Word of GOD, that in her Constitutions and Injunctions relating to External Worship, and the Ministrations of Holy Offices; nothing is commanded which the Word of GOD has forbidden; nor forbidden, which the Word of GOD hath commanded; that her Ceremonies are few and significant, so far from debasing or encumbering the Worship of GOD, that they tend to preserve Order and Decency in it; that they are established for this very Purpose, and declar'd to be neither *immutable* in their Nature, nor *essential* to the Worship of GOD, nor of *necessity* to Salvation; that Obedience is requir'd to them, not in respect to the *Things themselves*, but in respect to the *lawful Power* that has enjoin'd them; I say, after all this, to declare against the Use of indifferent Things in the Worship of GOD, because settled by the Orders of Men, is, in effect, to declare against *all regulated Worship*, and external Communion (for there never can be any but such Orders must take Place) and under the Covert of *Christian Liberty*, to patronize Division, and introduce Disorder and Con-

Confusion. Briefly, the *Liberty to which we are called*, as Christians, neither vacates nor lessens any Obligation we are under (by the Word of GOD, or the Principles of Christianity) of endeavouring to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*. To proceed. With respect to the State, Christian Liberty is then most egregiously abused, when it is pleaded in Excuse of any Disobedience or Contempt to the Civil Authority. For whereas the Scriptures command, *Every Soul to be subject to the higher Powers*, and require us to *submit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake*; declaring this to be the very *Will of God*; and the only Way of silencing the Ignorance of foolish, and refuting the Calumny of wicked Men, who misrepresented the Christian Doctrine, as tho' it weakned or undermined the Civil Authority, and that therefore it was unsafe for Princes to admit it into their Dominions, or encourage the Men who professed it; whereas, I say, for the Removal of this injurious Objection, the Apostles did, by repeated Precepts, charge the Christians with a dutiful Behaviour to all Civil Powers, whether Supreme or Subordinate: To interpret *Christian Liberty* to be an Exemption from these Powers, is to do the highest Wrong to Christianity, and to the Sacred Writings, as tho' they taught Inconsistencies and Contradictions. This Notion is condemned thro' almost every Page of the New Testament; condemned too by sober Reason, which looks upon it with Infamy and Abhor-

horrence, as the Parent of Tumult and Sedition. For from this wild Notion of Liberty, sprang that Euthusiastic Tenet, that *Dominion is founded in Grace*, which, whatever Mischief it may have done in the World, will, I hope, do no more; being too wild and extravagant to gain much Credit, and too absurd to deserve or need Confutation in this Place. In fine, They who think themselves privileged by their Christian Liberty to deny or withhold any part of that Obedience or Subjection which is due to the Civil Powers, *whether to the King as Supreme, or to those that are sent by him*, do incur the Apostolical Censure, and commit the very Crime which St. Peter warns all Christians to avoid; *using their Liberty as a Cloak of Maliciousness* †. Again, With respect to our Brethren or Ourselves, we then abuse our Liberty, when we make it an Occasion of Scandal or Sin. In the former Case we exceed the Bounds of *Love and Charity*, in the latter, those of *Duty and Sobriety*. In Things wholly undetermined by the Law of GOD, or Commands of our Superiors, St. Paul's Rule should take place; *Let every one of us please his Neighbour for his good to Edification* ||. He that gave this Rule practiced it. In the Case of Meat offered to Idols, he knew, and *was thoroughly persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that nothing was unclean of itself, and that an Idol was nothing in the world, there being no other God but one* †, yet because

† 1 Pet. ii. 16.

|| Rom. xv. 2.

† Rom. xiv. 14.

there

there was not in every Man that Knowledge, he exhorts all to take heed, lest by any Means their Liberty became a stumbling block to the Weak, and resolves for himself, that if Meat made his Brother to offend, he would eat no Flesh while the World stood, lest he should make his Brother to offend †. In all Cases of the like Nature, of which many occur in a Man's Life, here is a Pattern for us to follow. Many Things may be *lawful* to us, which may not be *expedient*, and he has too little Regard for his Brother, who will not abridge himself the Use of his Christian Liberty in some Things, rather than give Cause of Offence. He that will, in Things purely indifferent, use his Liberty to the utmost, without any respect to the Opinions or Infirmities of his Brethren, may gratify himself indeed, but will displease others; which being done without Necessity, will bring him within the general Case of Scandal, and make him obnoxious to the Censure of *walking uncharitably*. Lastly, We then abuse our Liberty, when under pretext thereof we indulge any Folly, or commit any Sin: for no Man is at liberty to transgres the Laws of GOD, or the Rules of Morality. For instance, We are at liberty to provide what Kinds of Meats and Drinks we think fit, and use them whenever Hunger or Thirst invite; but if we provide them with Niceness and Delicacy and unbounded Expence, if we indulge these Appetites at unseasonable Times, or to an immo-

† *1 Cor. viii. 4, 7, 9, 13.*

derate Degree †, so as to impair our Health, or prejudice our Understandings, *we use this Liberty as an Occasion to the Flesh.* Again, In the Case of Cloaths, we are at Liberty to please our selves, with a due Regard to the End of Cloaths, which are, Necessity and Decency. But if in this Matter we gratify an idle and towering Imagination, if we are gay and costly, much *above* our Rank and *beyond* our Estate, if we value ourselves on what we *wear*, and despise others who rise not to the same heights of Garniture with our selves, we here too *use our Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh.* The Case is the same in *Recreations and Diversions*, which, I think, no Man will deny to Christians the Liberty of using; but yet if we love and pursue them with too much Eagerness and Vehemence, if they engrofs that Time which is due to the Service of GOD, or our Country; our Families, Friends, or our Selves; if in them we waste our Lives and Substance, *we use our Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh.* In one Word, If we make our Liberty an Excuse for the Omission or Neglect of *any Duty*, which by the *Law of God or Man*, we are *bound* to perform; if we take Shelter in this for the Defence of *any Action or Practice*, which *Religion and right Reason* will not bear us out in, we *use our Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh.* Having thus specified the several Ways by which Christian Liberty may be abused, it remains only that I enquire, in a few Words, Wherein the right Use of it consists. Which leads to the last Thing proposed, *viz.* D Third-

† *Magna pars libertatis est bene moratus venter.* Sen. Ep.

Thirdly, *That if we will use it with Advantage to others and our selves, we must follow St. Paul's Directions, and by Love serve one another.* For the Services of Love are perfect Freedom, proceeding from a noble and delightful Principle, yielding much Pleasure in the very doing of them, and yet more in the Review. Whoever saw Cause to be angry with himself for Acts of Kindness and Love? Whoever repented of the Pains he had taken to overcome an outragious Passion? The Exercises of Love both produce a Calm in our own Minds, and favourable Thoughts of us in the Minds of others. Love attracts Love, and begets a reciprocal Affection, and so tends to create mutual Endearments and Happiness. Now so far are the Offices of Love from infringing or hurting our Liberty of any Kind, that they secure the Continuance, improve the Taste, and heighten the Enjoyment of it. By abounding in the Offices of Love, we are assimilated to the Blessed GOD and Father of Mercies, the inexhaustible Fountain of all Beneficence and Goodness; and effectually engage his special Favour and Blessing. By Love we give Value to all our Attainments in Knowledge, and to all our Performances in Christian Duty; since how high soever we rise in the one, or how exact soever we be in the other; if our Hearts be destitute of this Grace, *they will profit us nothing.* By Love, we give Strength and Beauty to human Society, and soften and compose whatever is harsh and rugged in Life. This will not permit us to divulge and publish

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the Faults of our Brother, but dispose us to cover and conceal them. This will not suffer us to aggravate his Failings and Infirmitiess, but incline us to lessen and excuse them; this will not allow us to make a bad Construction of any of his Words or Actions, when there is any room for a good one. Love excludes all Hatred and Malice, banishes all Envy and Pride, triumphs over Resentment and Revenge, harbours no fierce ill-natured Passion, overlooks a thousand Neglects and Provocations, engages us to be tender of our Brother, as of our selves, of his Person and Reputation, his Ease and Interest; and refuses no Pains, where any of these require Help and Assistance; no, it is the Property of Love.—But, whither am I going? The Properties of Love are too many to be enumerated in one Discourse; it is a Subject not to be attempted now, better to pass it, than handle it so much below its Dignity. I shall therefore close this Discourse with one Word of Exhortation to this Duty of *Brotherly Love*, grounded on two Motives, proper both to this Audience and this Time, viz. 1. The Credit and Honour of our Establish'd Church and common Christianity. 2. The Prosperity and Happiness of our Sovereign Lord *King GEORGE*, and the Peace and Safety of his Kingdoms. Suffer, I beseech you, the Word of Exhortation: Let me persuade you, *by Love to serve me another*, because the Credit and Honour of our Establish'd Church is herein deeply concerned. The Church of *England* is eminent for her Charity to *Christians* of every Denomination;

nation; how earnestly then should the Members of this Church study to excel in Charity one towards another, and *to abound therein more and more*. Should there be any Division in Heart and Affection, among those who profess to be united in every thing that is Good and Valuable? Who embrace the *same* Faith, own the *same* Lord, assemble themselves in the *same* Temple, agree in the *same* Way of Worship, eat often the *same* Bread, and drink the *same* Cup, in the solemnest Manner renewing their Vows of Obedience to GOD, and Charity to each other; thus, to all Appearance, *we are perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment**. We make up but one Body, of which our Lord JESUS CHRIST is the Head; Oh! that we were also animated with one Heart, and with one Soul! How absurd is it that any Dissentions should reign among those who are engaged to each other by the strongest and most endearing Ties? That they who meet in the House of GOD as Friends should not *always* live and act together as such. *Let Love then be without Dissimulation*, let it evidence its Reality by the clearest and most unexceptionable Proofs; thus shall we adorn our most holy Faith, and give a commendable Proof of true Christian Zeal for it; thus shall we bear one another's Burden, and fulfil the Law of Christ. For indeed our common Christianity requires this at our Hands. For as there is no Religion where there is not the Love of GOD, so Love to GOD and Love to the Brethren are inseparable, and one does as naturally

ally result from the other, as Heat from the Fire, and Light from the Sun. This was our Lord's *New Commandment*, the Mark he chose to distinguish his Disciples by; for this he prayed to his Father in the Behalf of his Followers, and this was the Legacy he bequeathed to them. The Exhortations to this Duty of Love, and the Encomiums of it throughout the New Testament, are almost innumerable; this is the Cement of Union, and the *Bond of Perfectness*, the *End of the Commandment*, and the *Fulfilling of the Law*. If therefore, we would be Christians *indeed*, and not in Name and Appearance only, we must love one another, *not in Word and in Tongue*, but *in Deed and in Truth*†; in Work and in Truth, as the Original signifies. For this is an *operative Grace*, and will manifest it self on all Occasions, where any Good is to be done, any Service to be performed, to the Members of CHRIST. While I am thus recommending Love, I think it proper to specify one eminent *Work of Love*, which I am to entreat your Assistance in. I mean, the *Work of Educating the Poor and the Friendless*, honestly and religiously; which is carried on in this Town with Care and Diligence, and of which you have a commendable Instance now before your Eyes. A Work which recommends it self by the modest and ingenuous Looks, the orderly and decent Behaviour, of the Children who are thus Educated; A Work which we trust will fully recompence both the Labour and Expence of all who are concern'd to promote it. And what good Man would grudge either *La-*

hour or Expence, when by them they may serve so many good Uses, as are aimed at in this Work of Love, *viz.* *cloathing the Naked, instructing the Ignorant; keeping them out of the Ways of the Destroyer, and directing them in the Paths of Peace and Salvation,* qualifying them for some useful Station, teaching them to be peaceable and obedient, faithful and industrious in that Station; above all, planting in them a true Sense of Piety, that they may walk in the Fear of the Lord all the Days of their Lives. But I must not run out into a Commendation of Charity-Schools; it may suffice to mention these Things, before those who ought to be presumed to be forward of themselves, and who want not to be provoked to encourage this *Work of Love.* I go on to the other General Motive, *Why ye should serve one another by Love,* because hereby ye will serve your Country, and promote the Peace and Safety of these Kingdoms, and in doing so, contribute, what in you lies, to the Prosperity and Happiness of our Gracious Sovereign King GEORGE, whose Accession to the Crown we this Day commemorate, with Joy and Gratitude, with real Joy and unfeigned Gratitude, because he is a King, in whom there is a Concurrence of all the Virtues, that can be desired to make his Kingdoms and People safe, easy, flourishing and happy. Who asks no more, than that we should be as dutiful to him, as he is just and kind to us, and be as sincere in our Desires, and as constant and unwearied in our Endeavours to promote each other's Welfare, as he is to promote the Welfare of us all. Who earnestly recommends Unanimity and Concord to all his Subjects; and has done every thing on his Part, not only to content and satisfy, but even to please and to oblige them. Who, by his late Royal Act of Grace, has drawn a Vail of Forgetfulness over that Scene which would not well bear to be reviewed or remembred,

membred, and, by his Gracious Speech from the Throne at the passing of it, has displayed so much Princely Generosity and Clemency, as will, we hope, conquer the *Hearts* of those, whose Persons were before subdued by his Army. Who, in fine, Rules with Wisdom, tempering his Justice with great Indulgence, and deserves that Title, which *Augustus Caesar* justly preferred to all the other Honours which the Senate and People of *Rome* did or could confer upon him; the glorious Title of *Pater Patriæ*, *The Father of his Country*. And since, by the Blessing of Divine Providence on his Counsels and Actions, we are in a State of Quiet and Serenity, what more is required from us, or what less can we do, than with Gratitude to God, and Obedience to our King, and *Love to each other*, reap the numerous Blessings of a mild and peaceful Government. I have now the Honour of speaking to several Persons of Figure and Interest in their Country, whom their Dependents and Inferiors are fond of imitating, and whose Examples are followed by *Multitudes*; such Persons cannot give a more acceptable Proof of their Allegiance to their Sovereign, than by the Exercise of mutual Love and Benevolence, and a readiness to interchange all Offices of Friendship †. For as the greatest Security and Strength of a King is in the Affections of his People, as it is the greatest Pleasure of a good King to know that he is possessed of his People's Affections. As this is a Treasure which our most Excellent King accounts dearer than all others; so undoubtedly they are the best and most valuable Subjects, who not only give their own

⁺ Sen. te consentiens cum pop. Rom. consalutat patriæ patrem. Cui lachrymans respondit *Augustus* compos fælius meorum votorum, Patres C. quid habeo aliud Deos immortales precari, quam ut hunc consenatum vestrum ad ultimum vita finem mihi perfervre liceat. Sueton. in vit. Aug. Cæs. l. 58. [†] Si exemeris ex natura rerum benevolentia junctionem; nec domus ulla, nec urbs stare poterit; nè agri quidem cultus permanebit. *Tul de Amicit.*

Hearts to their Sovereign, but also dispose many others to give him theirs too; but this great and good Service is not in the Power of every one to perform; little People may consider for, and all by themselves; but Persons of Reputation and Credit, considerable for Estate, or Knowledge, or Power in the County where they live, have a mighty Influence over those of a lower Degree, who are more disposed to act by the Authority of great Examples, than to enquire and judge for themselves; who therefore generally observe the Sentiments and Behaviour of their Superiors, in the Matter of Religion and Politicks, and naturally and insensibly take the same Turn with them. I hope I shall not be misapprehended in this Argument, nor be thought to intimate, even at the remotest Distance, that any in this Audience need be excited to any thing, wherein they may shew their Duty and Affection to King GEORGE, I only mention it as a Matter of Pleasure and Satisfaction to those who I now speak to, who are heartily well affected to his Person and Government, that they have it in their Power, in some Measure and Degree, to promote the Service, and contribute to the Ease and Happiness of so Great and Good a Prince, who takes Pleasure in the Prosperity of his People. It remains only, that I intreat you to use your Liberty piously, charitably, discreetly, and by *Love serve one another*, so may we hope that the Prayers we have this Day put up to Heaven, shall be effectually answered, that the Crown may never depart from that illustrious House, in which it is now established, and that the Sacred and Civil Liberties we enjoy may be long continued to us, under the Protection of his present *Majesty*, and under that of his *Royal Progeny*, to all succeeding Ages. Amen.